

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 SIL-01 LAB-06 EB-11 COME-00 TRSE-00 OMB-01

CU-04 FEA-02 INT-08 CIEP-02 USPS-02 OC-06 CCO-00

DRC-01 /133 W

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R 260625Z APR 74

FM AMCONSUL SYDNEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5368

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, AS

SUBJ: POTENTIAL IMPACT OF INDUSTRIAL DISTURBANCES ON ELECTION

REF: SYDNEY 2369, OCT 73

SUMMARY: IN A CAMPAIGN POLICY STATEMENT THIS WEEK, OPPOSITION LEADER SNEDDEN MENTIONED INDUSTRIAL STRIKES AS ONE OF THE ISSUES ON WHICH THE ELECTION WILL BE BASED. THE ISSUE IS, OF COURSE, A NATIONAL ONE, BUT IT COULD BECOME PARTICULARLY ACUTE IN NEW SOUTH WALES WHICH HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY SERIOUSLY AFFECTED IN RECENT MONTHS BY A SERIES OF STRIKES, SLOWDOWNS AND "BLACK BANS". MOREOVER, THE ISSUE COULD BE ESPECIALLY CRITICAL BECAUSE OF THE KEY ROLE WHICH WILL BE PLAYED IN THE ELECTION BY ABOUT SIX MARGINAL PARLIAMENTARY SEATS IN THE SYDNEY SUBURBS. THESE ARE SEATS HELD BY THE LIBERAL/ COUNTRY PARTY COALITION PRIOR TO THE ELECTION OF 1972 BUT LOST NARROWLY TO LABOR AT THAT TIME. THESE SEATS ARE STILL MARGINAL AND LABOR'S PERFORMANCE IN THESE SEATS WILL HAVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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MUCH TO DO WITH WHETHER IT SUCCEEDS IN HOLDING ONTO POWER.

END SUMMARY.

1. SOME OF THE KEY INDUSTRIAL AREAS WHICH COULD BECOME ACUTE DURING THE PERIOD OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN ARE AS FOLLOWS:

(A) POWER PLANT WORKERS:

MAINTENANCE MEN HAVE BANNED OVERTIME AT POWER PLANTS IN SUPPORT OF A DOLS40 PER WEEK INCREASE. EIGHTY TECHNICAL OFFICERS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOCATING TROUBLE IN UNDERGROUND POWER CABLES ARE STRIKING APRIL 25 TO MAY 5 IN SUPPORT OF A 26 1/4 HOUR WEEK. SCATTERED TEMPORARY BLAKCOUTS HAVE ALREADY OCCURRED. SIMILAR ACTION BY SMALL NUMBER OF POWER EMPLOYEES OCCURRED LAST SEPTEMBER CAUSING SERIOUS INCONVENIENCE AND CONSIDERABLE PUBLIC IRRITATION. STATE LABOR COUNCIL THEN PERSUADED WORKERS TO SUSPEND ACTION AS LABOR PARTY HEADED INTO STATE ELECTION WHICH WAS SUBSEQUENTLY LOST. LEADERS OF STRIKING FACTION APPEAR TO BE EFQREMISTS MORE INTERESTED IN USING ISSUE AS A POWER PLAY WITHIN UNION MOVEMENT THAN IN WHETHER ALP WINS THE FEDERAL ELECTION. KSEE REF TEL)

(B) WATERSIDE WORKERS:

WHARFIES HAVE HELD A SERIES OF 24 HOUR STRIKES IN SUPPORT OF WAGE INCREASES. NEGOTIATIONS FOR A NEW CONTRACT EFFECTIVE MAY 5 ARE EXPECTED TO RESULT IN A DOLS22.50 WEEKLY INCREASE FOR A 35 HOUR WEEK, INCLUDING A NEW ESCALATORY CLAUSE KEYING FURTHER INCREASES TO THE INCREASE IN AVERAGE MALE EARNINGS. ANOTHER 24 HOUR STRIKE IS SCHEDULED FOR APRIL 29.

(C) SHIPPING CLERKS:

MEMBERS OF THE AUSTRALIAN SHIPPING OFFICER ASSOCIATION (CLERKS WITHIN THE SHIPPING INDUSTRY) ARE DEMANDING EQUAL PAY FOR WOMEN AND ANNUAL LEAVE LOADINGS. NO STRIKE ACTION HWW BEEN ANNOUNCED.

(D) RAIL:;(

RAILWAY UNIONS ARE SEEKING WEEKLY PAY RAISES OF UP TO DOLS30 AS A NATIONAL FLOW-ON FROM THE METAL TRADES AGREEMENT. SECTIONAL 24 HOUR ROLLING STRIKES HAVE BEEN SUSPENDED DURING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEGOTIATIONS.

(E) TEACHERS:

SYDNEY INNER CITY SCHOOL TEACHERS HAD A ONE-DAY STRIKE ON APRIL 18 OVER DAMANDS FOR ADDITIONAL STAFF. THE ISSUE IS NOT SETTLED BUT FURTHER ACTION HAS NOT BEEN ANNOUNCED.

(F) GASOLINE:

PETROL DRIVERS AGREED TO POSTPONE FURTHER STRIKE ACTION UNTIL
MAY 11 OVER A DISPUTENPITH SHERNAEKGCSBAINS UNSETTLED.

(G) HOTEL EMPLOYEES:

ONE-DAY STRIKE APRIL 19 IN SUPPORT OF WAGE INCREASE. ACCEPTED
DOLS14 PER WEEK INCREASE IN N S W ALTHOUGH SOME WORKERS ELSEWHERE
BELEIVED TO BE HOLDING OUT FOR DOLS20 PER WEEK.

(H) BUILDING WORKERS:

BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS UNION HAVE HAD A SERIES OF
24-HOUR STRIKES DURING PAST MONTH IN SUPPORT OF A DEMAND
FOR DOLS20 A WEEK INTERIM WAGE RISE, FOUR WEEKS ANNUAL LEAVE
AND A 25 PERCENT ANNUAL HOLIDAY BONUS. UNION CLAIMS GO
BEFORE THE ARBITRATION COMMISSION APRIL 29.

(J) GARBAGE COLLECTORS:

RANDWICK COUNCIL (SYDNEY SUBURB) GARBAGE COLLECTORS ARE ON
STRIKE OVER TERMS OF REINSTATEMENT OF FOUR DISMISSED WORKERS
AFFECTING ABOUT 100,000 RESIDENTS.

(K) COAL MINERS:

COAL MINERS HELD A STOP WORK MEETING APRIL 23 TO VOTE
ACCEPTANCE OF DOLS25 WEEKLY WAGE INCREASE, AN ACTION WHICH IS
BEING USED BY OTHER UNIONS AS A PRECEDENT FOR THEIR CLAIMS.

(L) POSTAL SERVICE:

MAIL SORTERS AND HANDLERS AT SOME SYDNEY STATIONS HAVE BANNED
OVERTIME IN SUPPORT OF THEIR PROTEST OF CENTRALIZATION OF
MAIL HANDLING. THIS HAS CAUSED A BACKLOG OF 2000-3000 SACKS
OF MAIL RESULTING IN SLOWED MAIL DELIVERY.
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